

Title: The Origins of the Brucker Family in Cropsey

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Every small town is predominated by a few family surnames which are the most common. In Fairbury, the Steidinger family is among the most predominant family surnames. In Cropsey, the Brucker surname has dominated for many decades.

The story of the Brucker family began with the birth of Gottlieb Frederick Brucker on January 23, 1832, in Weitzburg, Germany. He was the son of Frederick and Euricka Brucker. His mother died when he was only five years old. His father owned and conducted a bakery. Gottlieb assisted his father in the bakery as a young man. In 1853, when Gottlieb was twenty-one, he came to America. Gottlieb's ship took seven weeks to travel across the Atlantic to New York City. Gottlieb lived in New Orleans, St. Louis, and Cincinnati. He then worked for the U.S. Government in building Fort Riley, in Kansas. Gottlieb then worked on farms in Peoria and Tazewell Counties, Illinois.

In 1858, at the age of 26, Gottlieb married 21-year-old Miss Katharine Anna Glabe in Peoria. Miss Katharine Glabe was born in 1837 in Niederaanlan, Germany. She was the daughter of Henry and Anna Margaret Glabe. Her father died when she was four or five years old.

Mr. and Mrs. Brucker were very poor when they were married. He had \$40 and she had \$30. Mrs. Brucker loaned her \$30 to her mother, who could not repay it for several years. Forty dollars in 1858 would equal \$1,388 in today's dollars.

They started housekeeping with minimal furniture and only had two horses to start farming. They spent the first four years of married life in Congerville, Illinois. From there, they moved to Peoria, Illinois in 1862. They then moved to Morton, Illinois, in 1864.

In 1866 they moved to the Cropsey area. Most of the land was virgin prairie with very few houses. When Gottlieb and Katharine Brucker moved to Cropsey, they had four children.

The day the Gottlieb Brucker family moved to Cropsey was very stormy. Their new house had just two rooms. The family used blankets to cover the windows to shut out the cold. They bought a farm that had 240 acres and paid \$15 an acre. This price would equal \$308 per acre in today's dollars.

Gottlieb and Katherine Brucker eventually had a total of eleven children. Unfortunately, two of their children did not live to adulthood. Daughter Elizabeth died at age seven and son William died at the age of five months.

In 1891 when Gottlieb Brucker was 59 years old, the Pantagraph reported that he owned farmland in both Livingston and Ford counties. The article said that Gottlieb Brucker purchased a farm in Ford or Livingston County yearly.

The Pantagraph reported in February 1898 that it was a joyous time at the Gottlieb Brucker home in Cropsey. A double wedding was performed at the Gottlieb Brucker residence. John Brucker married Miss Mary Lang, and Emma Brucker married Ernest Lang. Both grooms were young farmers in the Cropsey area.

A few months after the double wedding, the Pantagraph reported on Gottlieb Brucker's plan to give each of his nine children 160 acres of farmland. The article noted that Gottlieb Brucker was born in Germany and he settled in Cropsey when all the farmland was still unbroken prairie. Through hard work and astute real estate transactions, Gottlieb became one of the area's largest landowners. In 1898, Gottlieb was 66, and his wife Katherine was 61 years of age when they implemented their plan to give each child 160 acres.

A 1902 Pantagraph article reported that Gottlieb Brucker and his nine children owned 4,500 acres of farmland. The article recounted that Gottlieb paid \$15 per acre for the first farm he purchased in 1866. By 1902, the price of land had increased to \$110 an acre.

The article recounted that Gottlieb had accumulated this immense amount of land by solely raising grain. The paper reported that Gottlieb never sold a carload of cattle or hogs. Gottlieb stuck to corn and oats all the years he farmed.

Gottlieb Brucker took great pleasure in giving a silver dollar to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren each Christmas day.

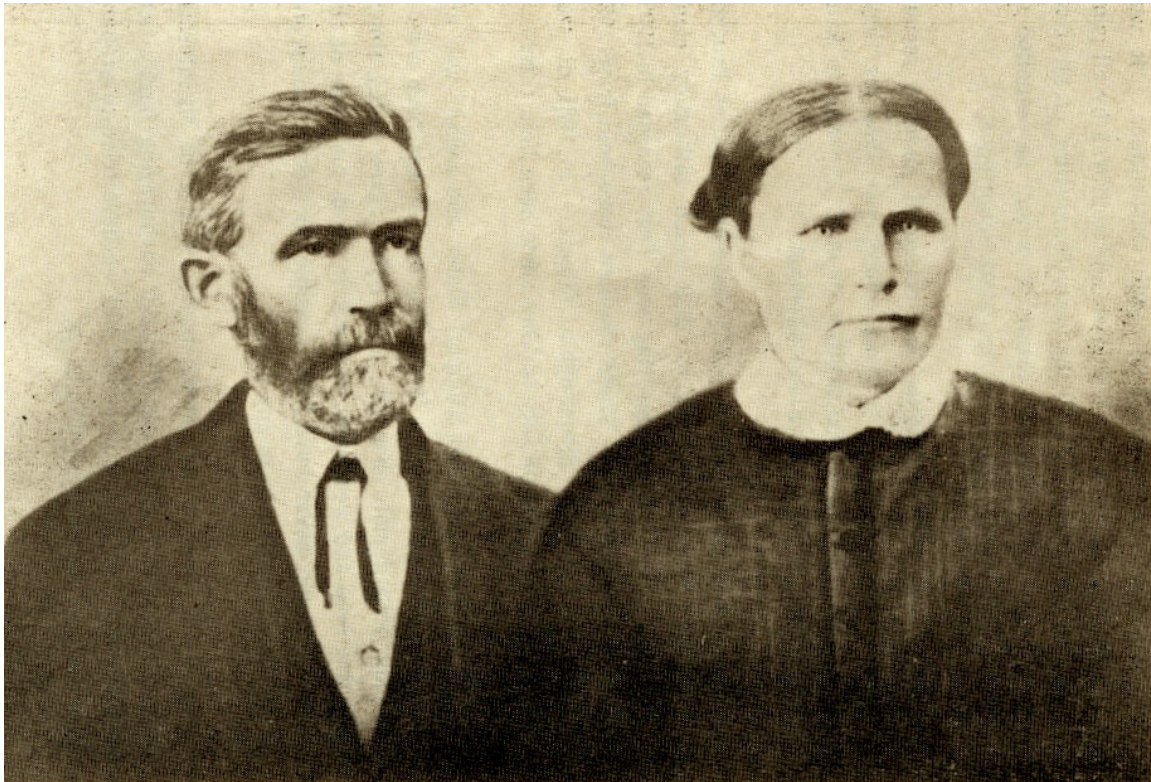
In 1908, Gottlieb Brucker died at 76 at his home in Cropsey. Mr. Brucker's obituary in the Pantagraph noted that Gottlieb and his children owned over 4,550 acres in the Cropsey area at his death.

Katherine Brucker died in 1910 at the age of 72. Gottlieb and Katherine Brucker had fifty-five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren when she died. Both Gottlieb and Katherine Brucker were buried in the Cropsey cemetery.

The descendants of Gottlieb and Katherine Brucker started to hold family reunions in 1922. From 1922 to 1930, these reunions were held at Miller Park in Bloomington. The reunion location was changed to Gibson City Park, Gibson City, starting in 1931.

The family also started to compile a book with the entire genealogy of the Brucker family. This book is titled ***The Families of Gottlieb Frederick Brucker & Katharine Anna Glabe***. The book was last updated in 2004 by Mary O. Stein. By 2004, the Brucker family tree was so large that it took about 170 pages to list all the descendants in the book.

The Gottlieb and Katherine Brucker family is another example of how some of our pioneer settlers could start with nothing and end up very wealthy. The family worked extremely hard and accumulated over 4,500 acres in the Cropsey area.



Gottlieb Frederick Brucker

Katharine Anna Glabe Brucker